

First National Bank Building (Star Jewelry)
100-102 East San Antonio Avenue
El Paso
El Paso County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3308

HABS,
TEX,
71-ELPA,
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ALBANY
FLORIDA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING (Star Jewelry)

Location: 100-102 East San Antonio Avenue, (Southeast corner of East San Antonio and South El Paso Streets), El Paso, El Paso County, Texas.
UTM: 13N 3514340
13E 359040

Present owner: Rubin Investments (August 1980).

Present occupant: "Star Jewelry" and "Eros" (pornographic store)

Present use: Commercial/Retail

Significance: The First National Bank building was built circa 1882-1883 for Joshua Reynolds, President of the First National Bank of Las Vegas, New Mexico. The establishment of the bank in El Paso was prompted by an anticipated real estate boom due to the arrival of the railroad in 1881. One of El Paso's earliest banks, it benefited from a prosperous business until it failed in 1933. Architecturally, it possesses Italianate details, but is primarily of the Second Empire style. An elaborately decorated building, it is the only example of this style in the proposed South El Paso Street Historic District (Summer, 1980).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The First National Bank building was built circa 1882-1883. An El Paso Herald article of May 10, 1882 states that the Bank will soon let a contract for a two-story building. By 1883 the building was complete (Frank Mangan, El Paso in Pictures, p. 27). The mansard was built between 1884 and early 1888. This date is based upon a photograph taken of the building by 1883 and a January 19, 1888 agreement recorded at the El Paso County Courthouse between Jefferson Reynolds of the First National Bank and the Wells Fargo and Company Express. The agreement mentions the construction of a wall on the third story, that being the mansard.
2. Architect: Not known
3. Original and subsequent owners: The chain of title during the 1880's is not clear. A recording of conveyance to Henry Lesinsky could not be found and the boundary description

under the recording for January 12, 1888 is difficult to decipher. Therefore, boundary descriptions for three of the transactions have been included verbatim below.

The property later bought by the First National Bank was owned by H. Smith in 1859 (Mills map for the City of El Paso).

On December 13, 1881, T.L. Slade and wife (formerly Mrs. George H. Matfield) conveyed the property to Jefferson Raynolds, fronting 66' (South El Paso Street) and 120' (East San Antonio Avenue). (1/545)

On January 12, 1882, Jefferson Raynolds sold part of the lot to Wells Fargo and Company Express of New Mexico for \$4,000 as described,

"...part of Lot 78 in Block 14; begins northwest corner of lot owned by First National 80' from the northwest corner of said lot, thence with southern line of San Antonio 40 feet to the alley which runs through said block at right angles with San Antonio and parallel with El Paso Street. Thence southerly with west line of said alley 54 feet. Thence westerly at right angles with alley parallel with San Antonio 40 feet. Thence northerly at right angles 54 feet passing the easterly line of said bank lot to beginning." (15/161)

On June 7, 1887 (Warranty deed) Henry Lesinsky and wife to Wells Fargo of the City of New York for \$21,000 as described,

"...bears north 16° west, 25 feet. Thence east 16° north running at right angles with said El Paso Street and parallel with San Antonio in said city 70 feet. Thence south 16° east running parallel with said El Paso Street and at right angles with San Antonio 41 feet. Thence west 16° south running parallel with said San Antonio Street 70 feet to the easterly boundary line of El Paso Street. Thence north 16° west running along said easterly boundary line of said El Paso Street, parallel with said El Paso Street and at right angles with said San Antonio 41 feet to the point of place of beginning. Said courses are reckoned with a variation of $11^{\circ} 30'$ feet together with the building thereon." (12/366)

On January 12, 1888, Jefferson Raynolds and the First National Bank to Wells Fargo of Colorado as described,

" . . . Begins at southeast corner of a lot owned by Wells Fargo which fronts 41 feet on El Paso Street. Thence, easterly parallel with San Antonio 50 feet more or less to the alley running through the Block. Thence northerly with west line of alley to the southeastern corner of (not clear) lot sold by said Raynolds to Wells Fargo 12 feet more or less. Thence westerly with the southern boundary line of said last named lot parallel with San Antonio and at right angles with said alley 40 feet with the southwest corner of said lot by said Raynolds to Wells Fargo thence northerly with the western line of said lot to a point 5 feet from the southeastern corner of the lot owned by First National, a (not clear) on the western line of Wells Fargo thence at right angles westerly and running parallel with the said lot of the bank ten (?) feet. Thence southerly with the lot of Wells Fargo first mentioned to beginning."

On January 31, 1913 the First National Bank (through Jos. G. McNary, Vice-President) conveyed to W.H. Fenchler and Fred Fenchler (\$165,000) a lot described as 65'4" on South El Paso Street and 120' on East San Antonio. (215/424)

On January 2, 1935 a Special Master's Deed by and between Scott C. White and Henry C. Caulfield and V. David Silvestro Fenchler. W.H. Fenchler had died, payment had been defaulted, and Caulfield acquired the above mentioned property for \$30,000 through auction. (594/66)

On October 9, 1940 Henry S. Caulfield and Fannie Delano Caulfield conveyed the lot to Charles F. Winters described as 80' (East San Antonio) by 65.38' (South El Paso Street). (678/217)

August 8, 1941 Charles F. Winters conveyed the lot described above to Manual Schwartz. (696/118)

January 13, 1948 Manuel Schwartz conveyed the lot described above to E. Wisbrun. (886/427)

April 9, 1952 Edwin Wisbrun conveyed the lot described above to son Rudolph D. Wisbrun, daughter-in-law

Eleanor K. Wisbrun, daughter Lillian W. Frankel and son-in-law, Sidney Frankel. (1067/48)

February 24, 1960 Lillian Frankel (Sidney) to Rudolph D. Wisbrun an undivided $\frac{1}{4}$ interest in the lot described above.

August 24, 1966 Rudolph D. Wisbrun (Eleanor R.) and Lillian Frankel (Sidney) to Irving I. Rubin and Gerald J. Rubin.

4. Builder unknown. 5. Original Construction could not be determined
6. Alterations and additions: As stated in the "date of erection" section, the mansard was added circa 1884 and early 1888.

By the turn-of-the-century the First National Bank installed a main entrance near the center of the East San Antonio facade. This entrance consisted of a door with a pediment which was flanked by two large windows with segmented arches. The brick facade was replaced by rusticated sandstone. Originally, the main doorway was located on a diagonal at the corner of East San Antonio Avenue and South El Paso Street.

The third floor (mansard) has been completely modernized within the past ten years in order to accommodate a blood donation center. None of the original fabric remains and the original floor plan is no longer evident.

The present owners have dismantled most of the wood and glass office partitions which existed on the second floor.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Most of the people connected to the establishment and eventual development of the bank played active roles in El Paso's early history. Like others at this time, they perceived an opportunity for financial gain with the arrival of the railroads. They were Jefferson and Joshua Reynolds and J.W. Zollars (Vice-President and cashier). The directors and stockholders were M.D. Thatcher of Pueblo, Colorado, Atkinson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad; George Anthony, Mexican Central railroad, J.W. Tays, Joseph Schultz, Adolph Krakauer, James P. Hague.

The Reynolds brothers --Joshua (born 1843 in Canton, Ohio), Jefferson (born in 1845 in Canton, Ohio), Saxton and Frederick --were actively engaged in the banking business before coming to El Paso. In 1871, Jefferson worked in the Thatcher Brothers Bank located in Denver, Colorado. At about this time, he and M.D. Thatcher (who later became one of the stockholders of El Paso's First National Bank) organized the First National Bank of Pueblo, Colorado (Paper Money, Nov/Dec 1978).

In 1876, Jefferson, with his brothers Frederick and Joshua, established the Reynolds Brothers Bank in Las Vegas, New Mexico. By 1879 they also founded the First National Bank of Las Vegas with Jefferson as President.

In 1878 or 1879, Jefferson organized the Bank of El Paso which became the First National Bank in 1881. Jefferson was the first president, but shortly after he turned the operation over to his brother Joshua. Joshua was to remain president of the bank until he retired on January 11, 1916 (Paper Money, Nov/Dec 1978).

Information about the other officials connected with the Bank follows:

J.W. Tays: Reverend Tays was one of El Paso's first City Council members and organized El Paso's first protestant Church (St. Clement Episcopal Church) in 1870. He was also an early publisher of The El Paso Times and died in 1884. (The Lone Star, November 22, 1884; El Paso Times, March 4, 1956; Out of the Desert, Owen White)

Adolph Krakauer: Krakauer was one of El Paso's leading businessmen. He moved to El Paso in 1875 and was employed by Samuel and Joseph Shutz, wholesale and retail dealers. In 1885 he entered into a partnership with E. Moye and G. Zork and formed an exportation business (Article of Agreement, University of Texas at El Paso, Special Collections; Out of the Desert, Owen White).

James P. Hague: Hague arrived in El Paso circa 1869-71 and became El Paso's first district attorney. He lived in a large adobe house located at 204 San Francisco Avenue. In 1881 he gave ten acres of his land to the Southern Pacific Railroad. (Out of the Desert, Owen White; El Paso Herald, April 15, 1937.)

Both the First National Bank and the Wells Fargo Company and Express leased the second and third story office space of their respective parts of the building. A number of lawyers and dentists were located here. Notable occupants included the Texas and Pacific Railroad and John Wesley Hardin, a lawyer and infamous gunman who spent many years in prison.

The First National Bank was to occupy the building at the corner of South El Paso Street and East San Antonio Avenue until 1914 when it moved into a seven-story building it constructed at East San Antonio Avenue and North Oregon Street (Henry C. Trost, architect). The First National Bank merged with the American National Bank which had occupied the building adjacent to the new seven-story building. The First National Bank, however, failed during the Great Depression in 1931.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Aultman Collection, El Paso Public Library.
Pre-1900 and circa 1900 photographs showing the north and west facades of the First National Bank Building.

Mangan, Frank. El Paso in Pictures.
El Paso: The Press/El Paso, 1971,
p. 27; view of the two-story First
National Bank Building from Pioneer
Plaza.

2. Bibliography:

- a. Primary and unpublished sources:

El Paso County Deed Records, El Paso City-County Building.

Book 1, page 545.
Book 15, page 161.
January 12, 1888.
Book 33, page 1.
Book 215, page 424.
Book 594, page 66.
Book 678, page 217.
Book 696, page 118.
Book 886, page 427.
Book 1067, page 48.

El Paso, Texas. University of Texas at El Paso Archives.

Articles of Agreement, Krakauer, Zork, Moye and
El Paso County. Acc. 724, Box 1.

John J. Maddaugh Collection. Acc. 750, Box 1.

- b. Secondary and published sources:

El Paso Herald

May 10, 1882, 4:6.	January 14, 1924, 1:3-5.
June 4, 1910.	September 24, 1929.
October 5, 1910, 1:6	August 21, 1935, 5:3-4
December 29, 1915, 1:2.	August 27, 1936, page 9.
May 12, 1923, 6D.	April 15, 1937, 6:2-4.

El Paso Times

August 24, 1904, page 1.
October 27, 1912, 1:2.
March 5, 1956.

The Lone Star

February 15, 1881, 3:1.

December 24, 1881, 3:2.

November 22, 1884, 3:3.

Adams, Ben E. "The Raynolds Brothers: Pioneer Bankers of the West." Paper Money, XVII (1978): 317-322.

Calleros, Cleofas. El Paso Then and Now. El Paso: American Printing Company, 1954.

El Paso, Texas and Paso del Norte, Mexico Business Directory for 1885. Albuquerque: Rackliff and Wainey, 1885.

Mangan, Frank. El Paso in Pictures. El Paso: The Press/El Paso, 1971.

Sonnichsen, C.L. Pass of the North. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1968.

White, Owen. Out of the Desert. El Paso: The McMath Company, 1923.

Map: Mills, Anson. "Plat of the Town of El Paso," 1859.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The First National Bank Building is a Second Empire building with Italianate details. It is one of the oldest and most architecturally detailed in the South El Paso Street Historic District.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is structurally sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The first story of the building is rectangular, while the second story and mansard are L-shaped. The building fronts 65'7" on South El Paso Street

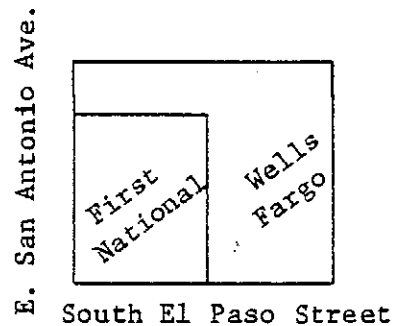
and 78'3" on East San Antonio Avenue. An entrance to the basement exists at the northeast part of the building (102 East San Antonio Avenue). It is not clear whether the basement extends the entire length and width of the building as the stairs are not safe to walk upon and there are no lights.

2. Foundations: The foundations of the building are not visible from the exterior. However, there is a cement foundation at the staircase leading to the basement mentioned above.
3. Wall construction: The first story consists of a modern storefront of wood and blue marble over cast iron pilasters. Aluminum and plywood cover the transoms above the storefront. The second story is of common bond brick painted beige. Above the storefront is a dentiled cornice of wood. Decorative tin pilasters are used on the third floor at four locations; two encase the area above the doorway which is on a diagonal at the corner of South El Paso Street and East San Antonio Avenue and the other two are on the facade fronting South El Paso Street. The windows have been painted over or covered with plywood; they are painted the same color as the remainder of the facade.
4. Structural system: The structural system is cast iron columns supporting wood frame floors; exterior walls are of load bearing brick.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The doorways have all been modernized and the doors are of aluminum or other metal. Four doorways exist on the South El Paso Street facade. The three northernmost doorways open on the main display area, while the fourth opens on a stairway which leads to the second and third stories. There is a doorway at the diagonal, and two on the East San Antonio Avenue facade. One of these doorways allows entrance to the other commercial establishment located in the building (102 East San Antonio Avenue). Any trim which may have formerly existed has been covered.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The first story consists of a continuous string of modern storefront picture windows. The second story windows are one-over-one light and double hung sash. They have a semi-circular arch with decorative tin hood molds with keystones. There are two paired windows on the South El Paso Street facade; one is located at the most northernmost point on the facade, while the other is flanked on each side by two single windows.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: The roof is a mansard of molded tin emulating slate and is covered with tar paper.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is an overhanging tin cornice with modillions, also of tin, below the mansard.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The dormers of the mansard are pedimented of tin and contain semi-circular arched windows. Three of the four dormers on the East San Antonio Avenue facade and one on the South El Paso street facade contain paired windows. An oval-shaped cupola rests on the mansard at the northwest corner of the building.

7. Other features: The manner in which the exterior openings are grouped seems to suggest that the original owner intended that the building be used by more than one commercial establishment. The pattern reflects the interior arrangement of the First National Bank offices and those of the Wells Fargo Company and Express.



C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is no information available because the basement, for which there is a stairway at the northeast part of the building (102 East San Antonio Avenue), is not accessible.
- b. First floor: The first floor consists of two separate commercial establishments. The northeast part of the building (102 East San Antonio Avenue) consists of three rooms, one behind the other. In the third room there is a lowered ceiling with a walk-in space above. The remaining part of the building (200 South El Paso Street) consists of an open retail display area. There is a mezzanine suspended between the first and second

stories at the southeast corner of this section of the building.

- c. Second floor: The second floor consists of an L-shaped central hallway with an elevator shaft. Offices are located off of this hallway. Many of these offices are separated from the hallway by wood and glass partitions.
 - d. Third floor: The third floor consists primarily of two large rooms, with two smaller ones at the southwest part of the building.
2. Stairways: There is a major stairway located at the southwestern corner of the building. This stairway was installed either when the building was erected or shortly after (article of agreement between the First National Bank and Wells Fargo Company and Express, January 19, 1888). It extends to the third story. At the entrance, on the first floor only, white and black marble decorates the walls. The railings no longer exist. There is another stairway of unfinished wood which reaches to the mezzanine and second story of the main part of the building (200 South El Paso Street).
3. Flooring: The flooring of the first and third stories consists of beige linoleum squares. The flooring of the second story is 2½" strips of hardwood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish:
- a. First story: The walls of the first story of the major portion of the building are of plaster and are painted brown. There are simple intermittent plaster pilasters with coved pressed tin molding at the ceiling. The walls of the establishment at the northeast part of the building are of fiberglass panels simulating wood.
- Except for a decorated pressed tin ceiling at the southernmost part of the building, all the ceilings are of accoustical tiles.
- b. Second story: The walls are of plaster painted beige. The ceilings are of plaster.
 - c. Third story: The walls are of fiberglass panels simulating wood. The ceilings are of accoustical tiles.
5. Openings:
- a. Doorways and doors:

First story: There are no noteworthy doorways and doors are of simple wood panels.

Second story: The doorways at the entrance of individual offices are of simple wood paneling flanked by single pane windows; a continuous transom exists over the windows and door.

Third story: There are doorways and doors such as those described on the second story as well as modern wood paneled doors.

b. Windows:

Second story: See second story description of doorways.

Third story: There is a skylight located near the southwest corner of the building.

6. Decorative features and trim:

Second story: Painted railings and baseboards exist in most of the rooms of the second story. There is also a simple strip of molding which follows the line of the arch of the exterior windows.

Third story: There are baseboards in some of the rooms of the third story.

7. a. Hardware: None of the original hardware remains in the building. There is a bathroom with six sided tiles on the first floor below the stairway at South El Paso Street. On the second floor there are two bathrooms with sinks which have chrome and porcelain fixtures.
- b. Lighting: One brass lighting fixture, no longer in use on the second floor, hangs from the ceiling by a chain.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The First National Bank Building is located on the southeast corner of East San Antonio Avenue and South El Paso Street. The East San Antonio facade faces north, while the south El Paso Street facade faces west. It is located in Lot 78 of Block 14.

Prepared by Patricia Torres
Historian
National Architectural and
Engineering Record
August 1980

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the South El Paso Street Project in El Paso, Texas was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER), of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS) in cooperation with the City of El Paso. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS and Kenneth L. Anderson, principal architect, the documentation was conducted by project supervisor Paul D. Dolinsky (HABS Washington, D.C. office), project historians Patricia Torres (HABS Washington, D.C. office) and Debra Wolfe (Case Western Reserve University), Community Planner Richard L. Solomon (University of Cincinnati), architectural foreman Dwight H. Burns (Texas Tech University), architectural technicians Ann Louise Barr (University of Arizona), Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Thomas M. Hocker (The Catholic University of America), and Sandra L. Sherrill (Auburn University), and architectural photographer David J. Kaminsky. The project was completed in the HABS field office in El Paso, Texas during the summer of 1980.

ADDENDUM TO
FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING
(Star Jewelry)
100-102 E. San Antonio Ave.
El Paso
El Paso County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3308

HABS
TEX
71-ELPA,
6-

XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20001